A SERMON

Preach'd at the

CONSECRATION

OF A

CHURCH,

IN THE

PARISH of *Castle-Ton*,

NEAR

SHERBORNE, *DORSET*.

September 7. 1715.

By JAMES LACY, *Vicar of* *SHERBORNE*.

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Printed for *W. Taylor*, at the *Ship* in *Pater-Noster-Row*; and *J. Cooke*, Bookseller in *Sherborne*. 1715.

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TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM

LORD *DIGBY*,

BARON *DIGBY* of *Geashill*.

My LORD,

THE Command of the *Right Reverend Father* in GOD the *Bishop* of *Bristol*, as well as of the *Reverend* DEAN *of Sarum*, in Conjunction with the Desires of my *Reverend Brethren* the *Clergy*, having encouraged the following *Sermon* to appear in Publick, I presume to offer it to Your *Lordship's Acceptance* and *Patronage*.

It was, My *LORD*, Your great *Love* to *GOD* and *Religion*, which put You upon *Building an House* for Divine Worship; And I know 'tis much in Your *Lordship's Heart*, to make it Useful to the whole Neighbourhood: A Design, *so Pious and Charitable* to the *Souls* of Men, that

it highly deserves a *Publick Acknowledgment*. And if *We* should *hold our Peace*, the *very Stones* of the Sanctuary *would cry out*.

But, *My LORD*, I have another *End* in this *Address*, and that is, to *recommend the Sermon* to the World, and so better serve those *Ends* of *Piety*, to which it is design'd, by setting before it so *Eminent* an Example, of *Delighting in the Dwellings of the Lord*, and the *Holy Services* performed in them.

'Tis easy to enlarge here, as well as in all other Parts of True *Religion and Vertue*, the best *Ornaments* of the *Great* and the *Noble*. But I am sensible that this will offend Your *Lordship*; and therefore shall only Pray, That GOD would *prolong* a Life so very Valuable in this degenerate Age, pour down all possible *Blessings* upon Your *Lordship* and Your *Family* here, and plentifully *Reward* Your *Works of Piety and Charity*, with *greater Degrees* of *Happiness* hereafter.

I am, My LORD,

Your Lordship's most humble

and most obliged Servant,

JAMES LACY.

A SERMON, &c.

PSAL. LXXXIV. 1.

How Amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!

THOUGH we cannot learn from the *Title* of this Pſalm, *who* the *Author* of it was, yet being certainly compoſed by one who was *hindred* from partaking of the *Publick Worſhip*, 'tis moſt likely to be holy *David*'s, and penn'd upon the *ſame Occaſion* with the 42d and 43d Pſalms.

This *Man after God's own Heart*, bears all his other Afflictions with wonderful Patience and Reſignation; the Revilings of his Enemies, the Revolts of his Friends, the Rebellion of his Beloved Son *Abſalom*, the Diſgrace of his Family, and the Eclipſe of his Glory.

But to be *Baniſh'd from the Preſence of the Lord*, rom the Place of his peculiar *Abode*, to be deprived f the *Publick Worſhip of the Sanctuary*, this is a *Cir-*

cumſtance of Suffering which *ſits heavieſt* upon his Spirits, and cauſeth him to cry out for the *diſquietneſs of his Heart.*

My Soul longeth (ſaith he, *v.* 2.) *yea, even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord, my Heart and my Fleſh cryeth out for the Living God: Yea, the Sparrow* (as he goes on in his elegant Complaints) *hath found an Houſe, and the Swallow a Neſt for her ſelf, where ſhe may lay her Young, even thine Altars, O Lord of Hoſts, my King and my God.* While *he himſelf* is denied this Liberty, he ſeems to *envy* the very *Birds*, who have a free Acceſs *to*, and an undiſturb'd *Abode in* the Houſe of God.

Then he proceeds to admire the *Felicity* of Thoſe who have the Opportunity of paying their *Conſtant* Devotion in his Houſe; and at all the *Solemn* Hours of Worſhip, can return to their Exerciſe of Praiſe and Thanksgiving: *Bleſſed are they that dwell in thy Houſe, they will be ſtill Praiſing thee.*

And no doubt but it was upon the calling to Remembrance the *Pleaſant Service* he was engaged in, *when he went with the Multitude, and brought them forth into the Houſe of God, in the Voice of Praiſe and Thankſgiving, among ſuch as keep Holy-day*, that he breaks out into this Paſſionate Ejaculation, *How Amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hoſts! q. d.* O God, the Lord and Creator of all the *Angelick* Natures, what can be ſo Lovely and Deſirable, as to be admitted into thy Sanctuary, and enjoy the Benefits, the Comforts and Tranſports of it?

Theſe Words offer to our Conſideration two Things;

1. The one Suppoſed; *That there have been always Places built, and ſet apart for the Publick Service of God*; called *his* Houſes *or* Dwellings.

2. *The*

2. The other Expreſs'd; *That theſe Places are Amiable and Deſirable.*

When I have ſpoken to both theſe, I will in the Third and Laſt Place

3. *Make ſome Application of them with a ſpecial Regard to the Occaſion of this Aſſembly.*

I*ſt.* I am to ſpeak of the thing Suppoſed; viz. *That there have been always Places Built and ſet apart for the Service of God, call'd his Houſes or Dwellings; briefly obſerving the Reaſons why they are ſo called.* The meer *Light of Nature* hath put all Nations upon *erecting Places* for the Honour of their Gods, and for their *own* Conveniency in meeting together to pay their *Religious* Services and Devotions; which, being to be perform'd by the joint Concurrence of ſeveral People, do not only require that a *Time* be fix'd *when*; but alſo a *determinate Place* be appointed *whither* they may repair and meet each other.

And from this *Natural* Principle, and the Guidance of God's *holy Spirit*, the antient Patriarchs, *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, no ſooner came to any *new* Place of abode, and pitched their Tents, but they had their *Altars* for *Divine Worſhip*, where they call'd on the *Name* of the Lord.

In the Wilderneſs, the *Iſraelites* themſelves having no *ſettled* Habitation, a *moveable Tabernacle* was made by God's *ſpecial* Command and Direction, call'd the *Tabernacle of the Congregation*, to which every one Reſorted that ſought the Lord.

But when the *Church* began to be Happy in a *ſettled* State; *David* the King, from his pious Zeal for God's Houſe, *deſign'd*, but *Solomon built him an Houſe*; which, as it was by the Appointment of *Heaven*, ſo was it in it ſelf *Sumptuous* and *Magnifi-*

cent, the very *Beauty* of *Holineſs*, the *Glory* of the *Nation*, and the *Wonder* of the World.

In this Place *Sacrifices* were offered; The Law was *openly* read; hither the whole Nation reſorted at *Solemn Feſtivals*; and here too were *daily Prayers* at *ſtated Hours*, on which Devout People gave their Attendance.

And after, when for the Sins of the People, *that Temple* was deſtroyed, *another* was erected in the room of it; which, how ſhort ſoever it fell of the *former* in *outward* Splendor and Appearance, was yet truly more *Glorious*, in that it entertain'd the *King of Glory*, the *Deſire of all Nations*, the *Ever-bleſſed Son of God*.

Beſides this, there were *other* Structures ſet apart for *Prayer* and *Preaching* in every Town, call'd *Synagogues*; Places honour'd with the Preſence of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*; and for the erecting one of which the *Centurion*'s Praiſe is to this Day recorded in the Goſpel, as a *Publick Benefactor* to a whole Nation.

And though *Infant Chriſtianity* was ſo *Afflicted*, *Perſecuted* and *Tormented*, that the Diſciples of our Lord were fain ſometimes to worſhip God in *Deſarts* and *Mountains*, and in *Dens* and *Caves* of the Earth; yet certain it is, that they had their *Oratories* and Places *Appropriate* for their Exerciſes of *Religious Worſhip*.

Such was that *Upper Room* mention'd in the *Acts of the Apoſtles*, into which the *Apoſtles* and *Diſciples* (after their Return from our Saviour's *Aſcenſion*) went up, as into a Place commonly known, and ſeparate to *Divine* Uſe, *Acts* 1. 13. Such a *one*, if not the ſame, was that *one Place*, wherein they were all *aſſembled* with *one Accord*, upon the *Day* of *Pentecoſt*, when the *Holy Ghoſt* viſibly came down upon them.

them. And we know that the *Apoſtle* St. *Paul* oppoſes the *Church of God* to *Common* and *Ordinary* Houſes, and blames the *Corinthians* for uſing *common* Feaſting in it. *What* (ſaith he) *have ye not Houſes to eat and drink in, or deſpiſe ye the Church of God?* 1 Cor. 11. 12.

And if there had not been ſuch *Places*, the *Perſecuting Emperors* needed not have made *Edicts, ſometimes* for taking them away from *Chriſtians*, and *ſometimes* for utterly demoliſhing them, as we find they did.

As for the *Ages after the Apoſtles*, and when it pleaſed God to raiſe up *Kings* and *Emperors* to favour his *Holy Religion*, and to countenance it with their *Civil Authority*, then the Number of *Churches* was multiplied. And that *forward Devotion*, thoſe *free-will Offerings* which once ſo much rejoyced the Heart of *David* to behold in the *Jews* on ſuch an Account, were then every where viſible among *Chriſtians*. Perſons of all *Ranks* and *Orders* endeavour'd to out-vie one another in their Contributions: They ſpared *no* Coſt, and thought nothing too *dear*, not only to *Build*, but to *Beautify* and *Adorn* thoſe *Sacred Edifices*. Expences of that Nature went under the Name of *Piety* and *Devotion*, and none counted *That* Waſte, which was expended about ſo *Religious* a Work.

'Twould take up more Time than I have at preſent, to enquire into the many *ſtately Churches* that were founded by the *firſt Chriſtian Emperor* Conſtantine, and *other Converts* about his Time; what *noble* Gifts were beſtowed on thoſe *Places*, and the *Perſons* miniſtring in them; and how *liberal* this *Land* of ours was upon ſuch Occaſions: A Liberality, *bleſſed be God*, *now reviving*, and *every Day* increaſing among us.

This little, I hope, may ſuffice to ſhew, that there have been always *Places Built*, and ſet *apart* for

for the *Service* of God. Why *these* are called *His Houſes*, or *Dwellings*, will ſoon appear, if we conſider them as *dedicated* to *Him*, and as *He* is more immediately there *preſent*.

That the *two Temples* of the *Jews* were thus *dedicated* to God by *Divine* Appointment, is abundantly evident from their *own* Hiſtory in the *Old Teſtament*. The *firſt* was, with the *greateſt* Solemnity, *dedicated* by *Solomon*, as you heard but now at large in the Firſt Leſſon. After the Demolition of *that*, and the *End* of their *Captivity*, by the Encouragement of *two Perſian Princes*, the *People*, the *Elders*, the *Prieſts*, and the *Prophets*, all joyn'd in Re-building it, and, as *Ezra* tells us, *kept the Dedication with great Joy*, Chap. 6.

So alſo 'twas with the *Primitive Chriſtians*; *Houſes* were no ſooner built for their *Aſſembling* together to *worſhip* God, but, after the Cuſtom of the *Jews*, they were ſet apart with the *ſolemn Rites* of a *formal Dedication*: By which *Solemnities*, as the *Founders* ſurrender'd all the Right they had in them to God; ſo they were ſeparated from all *Common* and *Profane* Uſes, and *Conſecrated* to the *Sacred* Offices of *Religion* only.

To this Purpoſe, there uſually aſſembled a *vaſt* Concourſe of *Biſhops*, and *Confeſſors*, and *other Holy Men*, from all Parts: They ſang *Pſalms* and *Hymns*, had the *Holy Scripture Read*, and *Preached* upon it; offered up *Prayers* and *Thankſgivings*, and received the *Holy Euchariſt*. Then alſo they gave *liberally* to the *Poor*, beſtowed *great* Gifts on the *Church*, and ſhewed the *higheſt* Expreſſions of *mutual* Love and Kindneſs, and rejoycing with one another.

And the *Commemoration* of theſe *Dedications* was conſtantly obſerved once a Year with *great* Joy and Feſtivity; ſome Shadow whereof ſtill remains to

this Day, in the *Wakes* and *Festivals* obſerv'd in *ſeveral* Places in *Memory* of the *Dedication* of their *particular Churches.*

Indeed, we are not now (under the State of the *Goſpel*) to expect that God ſhould *ſo ſignally* declare his Approbation and Acceptance of our *preſent Conſecrations*, as he did heretofore: But we need not doubt, but whatſoever is *Given* to *God*, and *Accepted* by his *Miniſter*, is well-pleaſing to him, and becomes as entirely *His*, as ever the *Tabernacle* or *Temple* was, which he took Poſſeſſion of in a more *viſible* manner, and filled with *a Cloud* and *with Glory.*

It may henceforth be looked upon to be his *Sanctuary*, and his *Holy Dwelling: Holy*, not *Eſſentially*, ſo only *God himſelf* is; not by *Participation*, ſo only are *Angels*, *Saints*, and *Good Men*; but *Relatively*, as being ſeparated from *common* Uſes, and *devoted* to God's *eſpecial* Honour and Service.

And his *Dwelling* alſo, becauſe the *Divine Preſence* here more *particularly* ſhews it ſelf: For though *Heaven* is God's *Throne*, and the *Earth* is his *Footſtool*, and *he dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands*, ſo as to be confined within their Walls, like the *Heathen Idols*; yea, tho' he is ſo *Immenſe a Being*, that he fills *all Places*, and is *every where preſent*; yet he manifeſts himſelf in *ſome Places* after a more *eſpecial* manner than in *others*, and is more *eminently preſent* in the *Congregation of the Saints*, by his anſwering the *devout* Prayers there made unto him.

So he *himſelf* has promiſed, *Exodus* 20, 4th Verſe; *In all Places where I record my Name, will I come unto thee, and bleſs thee. Where I record my Name*, i. e. which are *devoted* to my *Worſhip* and *Service*: In theſe *Places* I will be more *ſignally* gracious, by my imparting the *ſpecial* Favours and Bleſſings you ſtand moſt in need of.

The

The ſame alſo we learn from that *moſt pious* Prayer of King *Solomon* at the *Dedication* of the *Temple*, 1 *Kings* 8, 30, &c. *Hearken thou to the Supplications of thy People Iſrael, when they ſhall pray towards this Place: And hear thou in Heaven thy Dwelling-Place, and when thou heareſt, forgive*, &c. His more *peculiar Dwelling-Place* was *then*, and *always*, in *Heaven*, as it *is now*; but his Ears were open to the Prayers of his Servants in that *Place*.

And why ſhould we not think, that He is in *this* Manner preſent in all our *Places of Publick Devotion*, when the *Bleſſed Jeſus* aſſures us, *Matth.* 18, 20, *that where two or three are gathered together in his Name, he is there in the midſt of them*? There *ready* to receive their Supplications, and to grant the Deſires of their Souls. For the Granting our Requeſts, as you may find by the preceding Verſe, is the Meaning of our *Lord's* being with us: And if he will be thus *gracious* to a *few*, who aſſemble in *Chriſtian* Love and Charity, and agree to put up the *ſame* Petitions to *God*, much more when *greater* Numbers unanimouſly joyn in the *ſame* Worſhip, and offer up the *ſame* Prayers and Thankſgivings to *God* in the *ſame* Words.

Since therefore, *what* the *Tabernacle* and *Temple* were to the *Jews*, the *ſame* is *every Church* and *Chappel* to us *Chriſtians*, *Places* ſet *apart*, and *conſecrated* to the Service of *God*, and which may be as *truly* call'd *His Houſes* and *Dwellings* as *they* were; nothing ſhould be ſo *amiable* in our Eyes, nothing ſo deſirable, nor ſhould we long for any thing more than to *enter into the Courts of the Lord, to ſee his Glory and Power*, ſo as we have *ſeen it* in the *Sanctuary*: Which brings me to the

IId Thing

IId Thing conſiderable in my Text, *That the Houſes or Dwellings of God are Amiable* and *Deſireable. How Amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hoſts!* For

First, *Are not ſuch Places more apt to excite Devotion, than Places of common Uſe?* And is there any one, whoſe Heart has not ſhook off all Senſe of what is *Sacred*, that does not find himſelf *otherwiſe* affected, than when he enters into a *private* Houſe.

The Conſideration of *whoſe Houſe* we are in, minds us of the Buſineſs of the *Place*, and ſtrikes a kind of Awe into our Thoughts, when we reflect upon that *Sacred Majeſty* we uſually converſe with there. And the *Beauty* and *Comelineſs* of it, not only takes our Eye, and pleaſes it, but carrieth alſo its *Profit* along with it, *enlivens* our *Devotion*, *rouſes* it when it *ſlumbers*, and *recalls* it when it *wanders*.

For ſo the *Grace of God* is pleaſed to *move* us by Ways ſuitable to *our Nature*, and to *ſanctify* theſe *ſenſible* and *Inferior* Helps to *greater* and *higher* Purpoſes; that as the *Soul* receives Impreſſions through the *Senſes*, ſo the *Devotion* of it may be heighten'd by the *Loftineſs*, the *Beauty* and *Ornaments* of the *Temple*.

Secondly, *Does not the Company we join with in theſe Places, render them alſo Lovely and Deſireable to us?* Here are the *Tribes gathered together, even the Tribes of the Lord.* And can any thing ſo *rejoyce* a *Good* Man's Heart, as to hear the *Voice of a Multitude*; to be among *much People*, Worſhipping and Prai-

ſing *God* for his *Goodneſs in the Congregation of h*
Saints ?

GOD, to be ſure, was a *little Sanctuary* to *Dav*
when he was driven from the *Publick Worſhip*, an
he had a *private Oratory in his own Breaſt*, where h
could *mentally* retire, and ſhut up his Though
and Affections ; and yet as the *Hart panteth after t*
Water-brooks ; *So panted his Soul after the Enjoyment*
God in the Publick Solemnities.

When he was bleſs'd with a *free Opportunity* of Ac
ceſs to the *Tabernacle*, how is he carried, as it were
beyond himſelf, in *holy* Raptures of Joy ? And ho
glad was he, how much did it *rejoyce his Spirit*, whe
he *heard the good People ſay one to another*, *We will*
into the Houſe of the Lord ! The ſight of a *Compa*
there, their *Number*, their *Unanimity*, their *Devo*
tion, theſe all *dilate* his Heart, *awake his Viol* an
Harp, and are more *raviſhing* to him than any thing
on this ſide *Heaven.*

And indeed, as *God* is *more honoured* by ſuch *Pub*
lick Aſſemblies ; ſo 'tis to be preſumed, that *greate*
Bleſſings attend *their Services*, than the *Devotions* o
private Houſes. United Force is very powerful. They were
the *Prayers of the Church* that *delivered Peter* out o
Priſon : And whenever the *People of God* have been
plunged into more than *ordinary* Difficulties, and
therefore more earneſtly deſired the Aſſiſtance o
the *Almighty*, they have in *greater* Numbers re
ſorted to his *Houſe*, and with an *Unanimous* Con
ſent, and a *hearty Devotion* invaded *Heaven*, and
(as I may ſo ſay) *forced* down a Bleſſing from
thence.

Beſides, *That Devotion*, which when performed
by *ſingle Votaries*, or by *few*, is apt to *languiſh* and
flag, is by the Company of *others* increas'd and im
prov'd, whilſt that *Holy* Flame which ſhines forth

in *ſome*, kindles the like *Ardours* in the Breaſts of *all*.

To all *Holy* and *Devout* Souls, I dare appeal for the Truth of this; and I doubt not but there are many (not very *good* Men) who have found by their *own* Experience, that, as *Saul among the Prophets, had another Heart given him, and the Spirit of God came upon him alſo, till he became like one of them*; ſo *theſe*, in the *Aſſembly* of *God's People*, from the *ardent* Zeal and *ſtrong* Affections of *others*, have found many *good* Motions wrought in *themſelves*, their Hearts more *enlarged* and *chearful*, their Affections more *raiſed*, and their *Souls fill'd as with Marrow and Fatneſs, when their Mouth praiſeth God with joyful Lips*. But

Thirdly, *As the Company, ſo the Ordinances perform'd in ſuch Places of publick Worſhip, are very delightſom to thoſe that ſeriouſly and devoutly attend upon them*; I ſay *ſeriouſly* and *devoutly* attend upon them: For it muſt be confeſs'd that theſe are not ſo *pleaſing* to all Perſons. *Some* there are whoſe Minds are ſo *earthly* and *ſenſual*, that they ſavour nothing that is *Spiritual*: To ſuch, the *Service of God* muſt be an *Irkſome* Drudgery; But to *others*, whoſe Souls are *purified* from the Defilements of the World, and by the Practice of *Religion* wrought into a *Heavenly* and *Devout* Temper, it muſt be *exceeding* pleaſant, and they can truly ſay with the *Pſalmiſt*, *One Day in thy Courts is better than a thouſand*, far more delightſome than a *thouſand* in any *other* Place.

The *Prayers* that are here made, wherein we breathe out our Souls, and ſend up our *holy* Deſires to *Heaven*; what are *theſe*, but as ſo many *Angels of Commerce* between *God* and *Us*? Do we not hereby *expreſs* our Wants, and receive a Supply

proportionable; *Support and Counſel, Health* and *Safety, Deliverance* and *Salvation*? All which muſt needs afford a Man more *Joy* and *Comfort* than any one is able to conceive, but he that has it.

And if the Pleaſures of *Prayer* be ſo *great*, thoſe of *Thankſ-giving* and *Praiſe* muſt be much *greater*. For what indeed can be more *Delightful* than the Contemplation of *Infinite Love, Bounty*, and *Goodneſs* on God's Part; and the Remembrance of *paſt*, the Senſe of *preſent*, and the *comfortable* Proſpect and Expectation of *future* Bleſſings on ours? This cannot but excite in us Acts of *Love, Joy*, and *Admiration*, the moſt *Delightful Paſſions* of the Soul; eſpecially if we conſider, that this is the Work of *Saints* and *Angels above*, and in the Performance of which *here below*, we more *eminently* make good our Communication with them.

So alſo; Is not the *Word of God* here *read* and *expounded*, very *deſireable* to any *well-diſpoſed* Perſons? Is it not *a Lanthorn to our Feet, and a Light to our Paths*, to guide us into the Ways of Peace, that we may know what to *believe* and *do* in order to our Salvation? Are we not hereby warn'd againſt our *Spiritual* Enemies, and furniſhed with the moſt *proper* Weapons to repel their *fierceſt* Aſſaults? Does it not put us in mind of what we are *too* apt to forget, teach us to draw *good* Conſequences from what we know, and *Inflame* our Affections when they are ready to grow *cool* in the Things of *God* and *Heaven*? Theſe, and many the like Advantages of *God's Word*, made *holy David* to *Rejoice in it more than in great Riches*: It was *to him as his appointed Food, ſweeter than the Honey and the Honey-Comb*. Hence, as he deſcribes a *good Man* by his *Delighting in the Law of God*; ſo he tells us, That *all the Day long was his ſtudy in it*. The Affairs of *State*, the

the *Government* of his *Kingdom*, might indeed *employ*, but it was *This* that *refreſh'd* his Mind.

And then for the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* frequently *Celebrated* in our *Aſſemblies*: Is not *This* that *Feaſt* where we may *Eat that which is Good, delight our ſelves in Fatneſs, and with Joy drink everlaſting Health out of the Wells of Salvation*? Are not our Corruptions *ſubdu'd*, and our Sins *pardon'd* by thus applying the *Merits* of *Chriſt's Blood*: our *Weakneſs* ſtrengthened by communicating the *Influences* of his *Grace* which he purchaſed for us by his Death; and we ſupported under all Temptations by a *lively* Repreſentation of thoſe *great* Things he hath ſuffered for us? Here, if ever, the Soul is *comforted with Flagons*, and our Devotions are *animated* with that *Warmth* and *Vigour* which nothing can reſiſt. So that we cannot but account *this* the *beſt Banquet* we were ever invited to: And our Hearts being *often* ſtrengthen'd with this *Bread of Life*, *often* refreſh'd with this *Wine of Gladneſs*, we may run our *Chriſtian* Race, not only with *Patience*, but with *Eaſe* and *Cheerfulneſs too*.

Theſe are the *Offices* and *Employments* of *God's Houſe*; And it muſt needs delight any Man that has the *leaſt* Senſe of Goodneſs, thus to wait on the *great Lord and Governour of the World*, to be employ'd in the Service of his *Creator*, which is the very *End* of his *Being*, and the *Chief* Buſineſs of his Life.

Yea, and what is more, the *diligent* Performance of theſe Duties, leaves ſo *ſenſible* a Satisfaction behind it, gives ſuch a *different* Turn to the Soul, and inſpires ſuch *heavenly* Diſpoſitions, that the *Devotion* of the *Temple* never goes off without a *grateful* Reliſh and *powerful* Effect, except either too *ſeldom*, or *negligently* repeated.

For,

For, *Fourthly*, *As by the Ordinances of the Sanctuary our Graces are improved; ſo we are hereby fitted, and our Souls dreſs'd for the Enjoyment of an happy Eternity*; A *ſufficient* Reaſon for its being ſo *Amiable* and *Delightſome* to us. 'Tis by our *frequent* Addreſſes to *God*, that we learn to live with *entire* Submiſſion to him, and Dependance upon him in all the *Changes* of this *mortal* Life. We cannot conſider, and entertain our ſelves with him, (as is done in *Divine Worſhip*) but we muſt live always with a *quick* Senſe of him upon our Minds, and under the *Influences* of the *Holy Spirit* to direct and aſſiſt us in all our Ways. Neither can we conſider the *Spiritual* Nature of *God*, his *Juſtice*, *Goodneſs*, *Faithfulneſs*, *Mercy*, *Love*, and the like *moral* and *ſpiritual* Excellencies, wherein we are capable of *Reſembling* and *Conforming* to him, and *Admire*, *Praiſe*, and *Honour* him for theſe, but this muſt conduce to the Forming and Increaſing the *ſame* in us, and ſo advance our *Reſemblance* and *Conformity* to *God*, the greateſt *Perfection* and *Accompliſhment* of *human* Nature.

And whatſoever *diſpoſes* us to live *Holily* here, *Qualifies* us alſo for the Happineſs of *Heaven*. Our *Future* Portions will not be aſſign'd us according to our *Hopes*, but our *Habits*; and *Happineſs* is nothing elſe but the *Perfection* of *Holineſs*.

Thoſe therefore who have ſpent their Days in the *Tents of Wickedneſs*, whoſe Hands have been ſeldom lift up but to *Violence* and *Vanity*, as they are utterly *uncapable* to be happy in that *Society*, and in thoſe *Employments* to which they are ſo *great* Strangers, ſo neither have they any Reaſon to expect it. But how *eaſy*, how *pleaſant* will the Paſſage of a *good* Man be from the *Courts* of *God*'s *Houſe* to the *Holy of Holies*? Surely the *glorifying God* here in his

Earthly

Earthly Members, is a *Prologue* to that which he shall *Be* and *Act* hereafter; and he'll most readily bear a Part with the *Celestial Quire* in their most *exalted Hallelujahs.*

I have now done with the two Things my Text offers to our Consideration, and have shewn,

First, *That there have been always Places built, and set apart for the Service of God, call'd his Houses or Dwellings, and observ'd the Reasons why they are so call'd.* And then, Secondly, *Have endeavour'd briefly to represent their Amiableness, or what it is that makes them so.* All that remains is in the

IIId *Place to make some Application of what hath been said, and especially with regard to the Occasion of this Assembly.* And here,

First, *Have we Places set apart for the Service of God?* Let us *bless* him for *Those* who Erected *them*, and *bless him* also for *those* who *Beautify* and *Adorn* them; gratefully *Honouring* the Memory of *such* of them as are *departed* this Life, and *Praying* for a Blessing upon the Heads of those who *survive*; that *God would remember them concerning this, and wipe not out their good Deeds that they have done for the Houses of our God.*

Let us bless God's *holy Name* for those happy Opportunities of serving him in his *Sanctuaries* we now enjoy; that we are not forc'd from our Dwellings, and banish'd from our *publick Assemblies*, as our Forefathers sometimes were; but can with *Ease* and *Safety* step out of our *own* Houses into the *House of God*, and there be refresh'd with the *Solaces* of his Love.

Let

Let us joyfully *Commemorate* his *abundant* Goodneſs in placing us *where we are*; that he hath made us *Members* of a *Church* ſo *wiſely* Conſtituted betwixt the *Extremes* that have divided *Chriſtendom*; ſo fit to be the *Center* of *Union* among *Chriſtians*, and ſo near to the *Perfection of Beauty*, that we are the *chief* Objects of the *Roman* Fury, as well as the *Juſt* Glory of the *Reformation*.

That the *pure Word of God* is Preach'd among us, and the *Sacraments* duly Adminiſter'd by *proper* Perſons, *Authoriz'd* for that purpoſe: That we have a *Liturgy* very *agreeable* to the *Holy Scriptures* and the moſt *primitive Patterns*; in all its *Offices* admirably well fitted to *enkindle* Zeal where it is not, and to *encreaſe* it where it is; which hath Advantages ſo *many* and ſo *conſiderable*, as not only to raiſe it ſelf above the *Devotion* of *other Churches*, but to endear the Affections of *good* People to be in Love with *Liturgy* in general.

That we have *Comelineſs* without *affected Gaudineſs*; *Gravity* without *Moroſity*; no *Ornaments*, no *Uſages* adminiſtring to *Superſtition* or *Idolatry*; but only ſuch as tend to preſerve the due *Reverence* to *God* and his *Worſhip*: A *Religion*, which being moſt fitted to the *Nature* of Man, cannot but be moſt *acceptable* to *God*, as well as *Amiable* to us.

And can there be a *Juſter* Cauſe of *Thankſgiving* and Joy *this Day* before God, than to ſee *another Church* added not only for the Uſe of *this*, but of the *Neighbour-Pariſh*, whoſe *Church* being not ſufficient for the Number of their Inhabitants, *ſome* have thence taken Occaſion wholly to Neglect the Publick *Worſhip of God*, *others* to perform it in *ſeparate Aſſemblies* with *leſs* Regularity, and *leſs* Advantage: With what *Thankſgiving* may you come now to

ne or the *other* of these *Houses* of God, with what *Praise* into his *Courts, be thankful unto him, and speak good of his Name?*

Secondly, *Hath God his Houses, and are they so Lovely and Desireable?* Let us not, out of *Profaneness*, and for want of a *due* Sense of *Religion*, forsake the *Assembling our selves together*, as do *some*; nor out of *Dislike* to the *Worship* and *Communion* of our *Church*, as do *others*. To the *former* I may truly say, That as they *hate Knowledge*, and live as *without God in the World*, as if they had no Dependance upon Him; so the Time will come, when they shall *call* upon GOD, but he will not *answer*, and cry unto him for *Mercy*, but he will not *hear* them: And the *Objections* of the *latter* are so *weak*, and have been so often *refuted*, that I shall not *now* argue with them, but rather pity their *Prejudices* that hinder them from *discerning* the *Beauty* of *Holiness*, and pray *God* to open their Eyes, that seeing the *many Mischiefs* of *Separation*, they may be of *one* Heart and *one* Mind with us, and we may walk *together unto the House of God as Friends. How Amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord!* And how much *more* would they be so, if a whole *Parish* would flock to them, *as the Doves to their Windows?*

But till *God* shall be graciously pleas'd to afford us so *great* a Blessing: Let *us* who are in the *Communion of our Church*, not only come *hither*, but after the Example of the *Psalmist*, come with *great* Desire and Love for God's *Worship: Serve the Lord with Gladness, and come before his Presence with Rejoycing*; come hither, as to meet him in a *Place* where he loves to meet us, and where he gives us the *Blessings* of his Love.

The *Heathen* themſelves thought their Go ſhould not be put *off* with a *Sacrifice* dragg'd to th *Altar* : If we go to Church but for *Faſhion-ſak* for *Company*, or out of *Formality* ; if *Love* carri us not *thither*, 'tis plain that as we delight not i *God*, ſo will not he delight in us, nor can we ſe the *Lovelineſs* and *Beauty* of his *Houſe*.

When the *Church* had Peace, the *Primitive Chri ſtians* forſook their *Sports* and *Paſtimes*, left thei *Secular* Buſineſs, and failed not of their *conſtant* A tendance on the *publick Worſhip Morning* and *Eve ing* : Yea, their Zeal and Fervour was ſo *grea* that, even in *Times of Perſecution*, they would (poſſible) meet together, either by Day or by Nigh for that Purpoſe, though they hazarded thei Lives for it. An *Eternal* Shame to ſome among *Us*, who calling themſelves of the *ſame Religio* are yet ſo far from venturing their Lives an Eſtates to enjoy *Opportunities* of *Devotion*, that the will not leave their *Shops*, their *Recreations*, na their very *Idleneſs*, half an Hour and a little more for a *freer* and more *eaſy* Worſhip than they coul enjoy.

Thirdly, *Are our Churches dedicated to the Service God and Religion ? Let us take care that they be kept fre all profane and c mmon Uſe, and applied wholly to t Worſhip and Service.* The Diſhonour that is don to GOD's *Houſe*, reflects upon GOD himſelf, an he *reſents* it accordingly.

So when the *firſt Court* of the *Temple* at *Jeruſa lem* (the *Court* where the *Gentiles* worſhipped, an which the *Jews* counted *leſs Holy* than the reſt o the *Temple*) was made an *Houſe of Merchandiſe*, th *bleſſed Jeſus* look'd on this Abuſe of it as ſuch

Diſho-

Diſhonour to GOD, that with a *pious* Indignation, and an *overpowering* Zeal he drove out them that *bought* and *ſold* in it, *over-threw the Tables of the Money-Changers, and the Seats of them that ſold Doves.* A very *befitting* and *ſeemly* Expreſſion of his *juſt* Diſpleaſure againſt thoſe *ſacrilegious People*, how *different* ſoever it was to his *mild* and *gentle* Conduct on *other* Occaſions.

And as uſually *good Laws* ſpring from *ill Manners*; ſo alſo our *great Maſter* upon this Accident, aſſerts the *Sacredneſs* of ſuch *Places*, in the Words of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, which now he made a Leſſon *Evangelical*, *My Houſe ſhall be called an Houſe of Prayer to all Nations*; teaching us hereby, that every Place *Dedicated* to the *Worſhip* of *God* being *Holy*, ſhould not be *profaned* or made uſe of to the tranſacting any *Worldly* Affairs; and that there is a *Reverence* due to *God's Houſe* for the *Owner's* ſake, and the *ſacred Offices* there performed.

Fourthly, *Is God in a more eſpecial manner preſent in our Churches? Let our Approaches be full of Reverence and Devotion*: *Reverence* of the *Body*, *Devotion* of the *Soul*. The *Patriarch Jacob* no ſooner perceived, that the Place where he lay at *Bethel* was *Holy Ground*, but he breaks out into this *pious* Ejaculation, *How dreadful is this Place! This is none other but the Houſe of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven*, Gen. xxviii. 17. And were we but *alike* affected as this *good* Man was, we ſhould at our coming *in* to the *Congregation*, and during the *whole* time of our being *there*, demean our ſelves with an *Awful* Reverence ſuitable to the *great Majeſty* we are *before*, and the Work we are *about*; *ſtanding* while we praiſe GOD for his

Goodneſs, and *kneeling* when we *Implore* his *Mercy*, as *our Church* hath directed us.

We ſhould carefully abſtain from all *Irreverent* Behaviour, *Laughing*, *Whiſpering*, *Talking*, or any ſuch *Indecencies*, as *unbecoming* the Preſence of any *Superiour*, but a *Mortal* Man, a little above our ſelves, much more the Preſence of the *great* and *ever-living God*.

And we ſhould likewiſe take ſpecial Care to keep our Minds *intent* upon the Matter in hand; let our *Hearts* go along with our *Words*, and have our Souls *elevated* unto, and *fixed* upon that *God*, whoſe *Majeſty* we acknowledge *Preſent*; ever remembring that as the *inward* Worſhip, without the *outward*, is *rude* and *unmannerly*; ſo the *outward without* the inward, is *meer Pageantry* and *Hypocriſy*; ſuch as will by no means be acceptable to *him who trieth the Heart, and ſearcheth the very Reins*.

Fifthly and Laſtly, *Are our Churches God's Houſes? Then we may make the Pſalmiſt's Inference, Holineſs becometh thine Houſe for ever*; and ſo live, that as they had their *firſt* Relation of *Sanctity* by the *Conſecration* of a *holy Preſident* of Religion, it may be perpetuated in *Holy Offices*, and receive a *daily* Conſecration, by the aſſiſtance of *ſanctified* and *religious* Perſons, a *holy* Prieſt, and a *holy* People.

The *Jews* had written over the *Gates* of their *Synagogues*, that of the 118*th* Pſalm and the 20th *ver. This is the Gate of the Lord, the Righteous ſhall enter into it*: And from the many *Typical* Precepts given to *them*, of *waſhing* and *cleanſing themſelves* by divers Ceremonies before they enter'd into the Sanctuary: *We Chriſtians* ſhould learn to bring along with us to this Place, *Undefiled Bodies* and *ſanctified*

Eified Minds, free from all filthy Luſts and unruly Paſſions.

All *Impenitent* Perſons are *unfit* for *Churches*, and God rejects ſuch *Sacrificers* as have no Contrition, no Purpoſe to forſake Sin, and keep his Commandments which are ever *Parts* of *true* Repentance. If we come hither, before-hand reſolved, that *hearing* we *will not hear*, nor *conſider*; if we cry to *God* for *Mercy*, and yet will have none upon our ſelves; if we *ask* for *Grace*, and yet will *not take* it when 'tis offered to us, or turn it into Wantonneſs, we cannot expect that God ſhould regard what we do, or that the Holineſs of the *Place* ſhould *Hallow* ſuch *impure*, ſuch *careleſs* Worſhippers.

Hence it was, that in the *Primitive* Times, the *Deacon* ſtood up before the receiving the bleſſed *Euchariſt*, and cried with a loud Voice, *Holy Things be to them that are holy*: And our *Church* in imitation of the *antient* Forms, hath put the *Confeſſion* of *Sins* in the *firſt* Place, becauſe *God* himſelf hath aſſured us, that he will not hear the *Prayers* of *wilful impenitent* Sinners.

Let us therefore in imitation of our Royal *Pſalmiſt*, *waſh our hands in Innocency*; repent of all our Sins, and lead holy and upright Lives, becoming Members of ſo *Holy*, ſo *Apoſtolical* a CHURCH. Then we may *enter God's Court with joy, and His Houſe with rejoycing*: We may go boldly to *his Altar*, and to the Throne of *Grace*: Our *Prayers* will be ſet forth in *his ſight* as the *Incenſe*; and our *Praiſes* and *Thanks-givings* be an acceptable Sacrifice; GOD will give ſuch a *Bleſſing* to his *Word*, that it will bring *forth Fruit* abundantly, and be a *ſavour of Life* unto *Life*, *unto all them that hear it*. And, as ſure as we partake of the *Communion of Chriſt's Body and*

and Blood, we ſhall be *fulfilled with his Grace and Heavenly* Benediction.

In ſhort: Let our *Obedience* keep *time* with our *Devotion*: And then, as we need not doubt of God's *gracious Acceptance* of our preſent *hearty*, though *imperfect* Service; ſo we ſhall in his due time be tranſlated from *theſe Amiable Tabernacles* here *below*, to that *everlaſting Tabernacle, that Building of God, not made with Hands, Eternal in the Heavens, Where we ſhall ſee God as He is, and ſhall praiſe him and magnify him for ever.* Which GOD of his Infinite Mercy grant unto Us, through the alone Merits of JESUS CHRIST, our only LORD and SAVIOUR: To whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be given all Honour, Worſhip and Obedience, now, and for evermore.

FINIS.

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